

After the Fall

Surgery heals a high school lacrosse player's shoulder in time for him to start at Notre Dame

Recruited as a high school sophomore to play lacrosse at University of Notre Dame, Garrett Epple was playing his last regular season game as a senior at Calvert Hall High School when he took a hard fall on the shoulder of his dominant arm – the one with which he shoots and throws. The searing pain worried him that his college lacrosse career

might be over before it had even begun.

Calvert Hall's trainer, Chris Zinn, called the team doctor, orthopaedic surgeon Alvin Detterline, MD, of Towson Orthopaedic Associates and a clinical assistant professor of orthopaedics at University of Maryland School of Medicine, and drove Garrett and his parents straight to Dr. Detterline's office.

"We were all very nervous," says Garrett's mom, Lisa.

FORCEFUL INJURY CAUSES TEAR

"It was a scary-looking injury," Dr. Detterline says. "The end of the collarbone was protruding out very prominently." An x-ray confirmed that Garrett had separated his shoulder.

"Shoulder separations are pretty common in football, lacrosse and other contact sports.

Most of them are not as severe as Garrett's," the doctor says. "It takes a forceful injury to tear all the ligaments that stabilize the collarbone."

Although most shoulder separations involve sprains or slight tears that heal with therapy and rest, severely torn ligaments need surgery. Two days later, Garrett was in the operating room under the skillful hands of Dr. Detterline.

"The surgical procedure is technical because the ligaments that connect the shoulder blade to the collarbone need to be repaired so that they heal with proper tension," Dr. Detterline explains. Anatomic repair is critical. "The surgeon has to

know exactly where the ligaments go and attach them precisely. If they don't heal properly, the collarbone can push into the shoulder muscles, causing pain when the person throws or shoots."

For Garrett, the surgery was a success. The next step was 12 weeks of rehabilitation. "Garrett tackled his rehabilitation with everything he had," Dr. Detterline says. "You don't get to be a lacrosse All-American without an excellent work ethic."

BACK IN THE GAME

By the time his college freshman year began, Garrett had recovered full range of motion and strength and was playing



Alvin Detterline, MD

fall lacrosse at Notre Dame. "Now, you cannot even see on his x-rays that there was an injury," Dr. Detterline says.

"We are very happy. Garrett's coaches are very happy," Lisa says. "You never know how good your doctor really is until something goes wrong and you need him."

This column is presented as a reader service and sponsored by:



7601 Osler Drive Towson, MD 21204 • StJosephTowson.com

To find an orthopaedic physician at UM St. Joseph Medical Center, visit stjosephtowson.com/findadoc or call 410-337-1337